

SREB's Powerful Coaching Practices



SREB

School
Improvement

Powerful Coaching Practices

Overview and Intended Use

SREB's Powerful Coaching Practices (PCPs) describe what effective instructional coaching looks like in action: what teachers and students experience when strong instructional supports are in place for teachers. Organized into five interrelated practices, the PCPs provide a clear, evidence-informed picture of how instructional coaching strengthens classroom instruction, supports collaborative professional learning and builds systems that help teachers continuously improve their practice and student learning outcomes.

These practices are designed primarily for instructional coaches. In many schools and districts, however, coaching responsibilities may also be carried out by department chairs, teacher team leaders, instructional leaders or administrators. The practices in this framework describe how coaching can strengthen instruction, support reflective practice and promote continuous improvement across classrooms and teams.

Two foundational anchors guide the Powerful Coaching Practices: maintaining a student-centered focus and using reflective questioning to support professional learning. A student-centered stance ensures that coaching conversations continually return to the impact of instructional decisions on student learning experiences and outcomes. Whether coaches are planning lessons, analyzing student work, facilitating team collaboration or reflecting on instruction, the ultimate purpose of coaching is to strengthen teaching in ways that improve the quality of learning and success for every student.

Reflective questioning works alongside this student-centered focus as a core strategy for effective coaching. Coaches use purposeful questions to help teachers examine instructional practice, analyze evidence of student learning and determine next instructional steps. While questioning may not be explicitly named in every descriptor, it is a critical strategy for building trust, strengthening collaboration and supporting the reflection necessary for continuous instructional improvement.

Effective coaches also recognize that coaching approaches must be responsive to context. Some situations call for collaborative inquiry and reflection, while others, such as supporting new teachers or introducing unfamiliar instructional practices, may require more direct guidance or modeling. Successful coaches consider the experience and needs of the teacher or team and apply the strategies and coaching moves in this framework in ways that best support teacher growth and improved student learning.

Schools, districts and states may use SREB's Powerful Coaching Practices to strengthen coaching systems, clarify expectations for instructional coaching and guide professional learning for educators who support teachers in improving instruction. The framework includes examples of coach and teacher behaviors, as well as artifacts that illustrate how effective coaching practices are put into action and support ongoing reflection and continuous improvement.

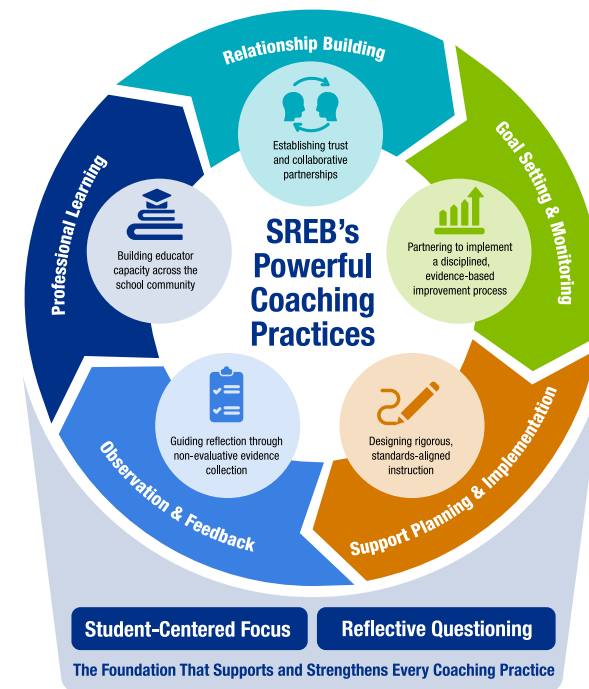


Figure 1.
SREB's Powerful Coaching Practices.
Effective coaching is built upon a foundation of Student-Centered Focus and Reflective Questioning. These foundational principles support five high-leverage coaching practices that strengthen educator capacity, improve instructional quality and promote continuous improvement across schools and districts.

1. Relationship Building (How Coaches Establish Trust): *Builds trusting, collaborative partnerships with teachers through confidentiality, empathy and shared ownership of the coaching process to support honest reflection, instructional risk-taking and continuous improvement.*

COACH BEHAVIORS	TEACHER BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>1 Establish coaching relationships grounded in trust, confidentiality, consistency, reliability and respect for teachers' professional expertise and classroom context.</p>	<p>→ Engage openly in reciprocal conversations and share insights about classroom practices and student learning.</p>	<p>→ Coaching partnership agreements or team norms outlining confidentiality, roles and expectations for the coaching relationship.</p>
<p>2 Demonstrate empathetic listening by paraphrasing, validating teachers' perspectives and professional expertise, and using reflective questioning to deepen professional dialogue.</p>	<p>→ Participate in reflective dialogue about instructional practices, student needs and opportunities for improvement.</p>	<p>→ Coaching conversation notes or reflection tools showing paraphrasing, questioning and teacher reflection during coaching dialogue.</p>
<p>3 Create a safe environment where teachers feel comfortable discussing instructional challenges, reflecting on practice and experimenting with new practices.</p>	<p>→ Reflect honestly on instructional challenges and attempt new practices to improve student learning.</p>	<p>→ Teacher reflection notes or lesson artifacts documenting experimentation with new instructional strategies.</p>
<p>4 Engage teachers as partners by co-constructing goals, identifying priorities and jointly determining next steps for instructional growth.</p>	<p>→ Collaborate with the coach to establish goals, determine priorities and take ownership of the coaching process.</p>	<p>→ Coaching cycle plans or professional learning action plans outlining co-constructed goals, priorities and next steps for instructional growth.</p>
<p>5 Maintain a non-evaluative stance that positions coaching as collaborative inquiry focused on improving teaching and learning.</p>	<p>→ Proactively seek coaching support by initiating conversations, sharing instructional plans or classroom evidence, and engaging with the coach to analyze and address instructional challenges.</p>	<p>→ Lesson plans, student work samples, classroom video or planning notes used during coaching conversations capturing analysis of instructional practice and identification of future instructional decisions.</p>

2. Goal Setting and Monitoring (How Coaches Focus Improvement): *Partner with teachers to implement a disciplined, evidence-based improvement process that establishes clear instructional goals aligned to improvement priorities, monitors progress through evidence and reflection, and adjusts instructional actions to strengthen teaching practice and improve student outcomes.*

COACH BEHAVIORS	TEACHER BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>1 Work with district or campus leaders to translate improvement priorities and vision into clear instructional focus areas and create practical tools or resources that help teachers understand how their work contributes to those priorities.</p>	<p>→ Describe campus or district instructional priorities and identify how their classroom instruction or team goals contribute to achieving those priorities.</p>	<p>→ Teacher-facing planning tools, department or professional learning community (PLC) goal-setting documents, or coaching planning notes aligning teacher work to campus or district improvement priorities.</p>
<p>2 Organize and facilitate structured analysis of summative student learning data (e.g., state or end-of-year assessments) to help teachers identify trends, priority standards and areas for instructional improvement.</p>	<p>→ Analyze summative student learning data and identify priority areas for instructional improvement aligned to instructional goals.</p>	<p>→ Student performance reports or data analysis summaries highlighting instructional priorities identified through summative data.</p>
<p>3 Guide teachers individually or in teams to establish clear instructional goals aligned to improvement priorities and structure the work into manageable improvement cycles (e.g., 30-, 60-, or 90-day plans) that identify key actions, responsibilities and expected outcomes.</p>	<p>→ Articulate instructional goals aligned to improvement priorities, implement agreed-upon practices and discuss progress and next steps during coaching conversations.</p>	<p>→ SMART goals, action plans or coaching cycle plans outlining instructional goals, timelines, responsibilities and intended student outcomes.</p>
<p>4 Compile and organize benchmark or interim assessment data into student-level views that allow teachers to monitor progress toward goals, identify students needing additional support and determine whether instructional practices are producing expected results.</p>	<p>→ Review benchmark data to assess student progress, identify students who need additional support and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices.</p>	<p>→ Benchmark data dashboards or student progress trackers showing progress toward instructional goals.</p>
<p>5 Facilitate data conversations with teachers or teams that examine student progress and determine whether instructional practices should be adopted, adapted or abandoned during the next improvement cycle.</p>	<p>→ Engage in data discussions, interpret student learning evidence and adjust instructional practices based on what the data reveal about student progress.</p>	<p>→ Teacher team meeting notes and revised lesson plans showing instructional adjustments based on student learning evidence.</p>
<p>6 Recognize progress toward instructional goals and guide teachers in refining or recalibrating goals as instructional practice and student learning needs evolve.</p>	<p>→ Reflect on progress toward goals, celebrate growth and adjust instructional actions to continue improving student learning.</p>	<p>→ Progress monitoring records documenting growth toward goals and adjustments based on student learning evidence.</p>

3. Support Planning and Implementation of High-Quality Instruction (How Coaches Strengthen Instructional Practice): *Support teachers in designing and implementing rigorous, standards-aligned units and daily lessons that engage students in meaningful tasks by clarifying learning targets, selecting high-leverage instructional practices, anticipating student thinking and using assessment evidence to monitor student learning.*

COACH BEHAVIORS	TEACHER BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>1 Facilitate collaborative unit planning with teachers by analyzing standards expectations, considering students' strengths, needs and prior learning, and aligning high-quality instructional materials, practices and assessments to support student mastery.</p>	<p>→ Collaborate with the coach and colleagues during unit planning to analyze standards, consider knowledge of students' strengths, needs and prior learning, and align instructional tasks and assessments to support student mastery.</p>	<p>→ Standards analysis protocols or collaborative unit planning documents aligning standards, instructional tasks and assessments.</p>
<p>2 Partner with teachers to develop standards-based learning targets and success criteria aligned to unit goals and intended student outcomes.</p>	<p>→ Articulate clear, standards-aligned learning targets and success criteria that guide instruction and student learning.</p>	<p>→ Lesson plans showing clearly defined learning targets and success criteria aligned to standards and unit goals.</p>
<p>3 Support teachers in designing and implementing instruction and assignments aligned to learning targets that maintain appropriate cognitive demand and promote student engagement and deeper understanding.</p>	<p>→ Design and facilitate instruction and implement assignments aligned to learning targets and designed to engage students in rigorous thinking.</p>	<p>→ Task analysis protocols or planning documents identifying the cognitive demand and rigor of the instructional assignment.</p>
<p>4 Guide teachers in anticipating student thinking and selecting differentiated practices, scaffolds or enrichment aligned to high-quality instructional materials and student readiness.</p>	<p>→ Implement scaffolds and enrichment practices to address the unique needs of students.</p>	<p>→ Lesson plans incorporating differentiated practices, scaffolds and enrichment aligned to student needs and instructional materials.</p>
<p>5 Collaborate with teachers to design and embed formative assessments within lessons that accurately measure progress toward learning targets and success criteria and inform instructional adjustments</p>	<p>→ Implement formative assessments and use results to adjust instruction and address student needs.</p>	<p>→ Formative assessments detailing alignment to learning targets with evidence of instructional adjustments based on results.</p>
<p>6 Assist teachers in designing summative assessments aligned to standards and learning targets that reflect the progression of content and skills within the unit.</p>	<p>→ Design summative assessments aligned to standards that measure student mastery of the unit's essential knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>→ Unit assessment framework outlining learning milestones, formative checks and summative assessments aligned to standards and learning targets.</p>

4. Observation and Feedback (How Coaches Guide Reflection and Improvement): *Partner with teachers in focused classroom observations to collect evidence of instructional practices and student thinking and provide non-evaluative feedback that examines the lesson’s impact on learning and identifies next instructional moves to strengthen teaching and improve student outcomes.*

COACH BEHAVIORS	TEACHER BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>➊ Partner with teachers before classroom visits to clarify instructional goals, identify goal-aligned focus areas and determine how evidence of practice and student learning will be collected.</p>	<p>➔ Collaborate with the coach to identify the focus of classroom observations and determine the type of evidence that will inform reflection.</p>	<p>➔ Observation planning notes or coaching cycle plans identifying the focus of classroom visits and evidence collection methods.</p>
<p>➋ Conduct classroom observations that gather non-evaluative data on instructional practices and student engagement aligned to the coaching goal.</p>	<p>➔ Implement planned instructional practices while welcoming observation and evidence collection as part of the coaching process.</p>	<p>➔ Observation evidence notes documenting instructional practices, student engagement and alignment to the observation focus.</p>
<p>➌ Collect and organize evidence of student learning, including student work, formative assessments and classroom interactions to examine the impact of instructional practices.</p>	<p>➔ Analyze evidence of student learning, including student work, formative assessments and classroom interactions, to reflect on the impact of instructional practices on student learning.</p>	<p>➔ Student work analysis protocols, formative assessment results and observation evidence notes linking outcomes to the instructional practice.</p>
<p>➍ Construct feedback aligned to the teacher’s learning goals and share it both in the moment and during formal debriefs, leveraging inquiry and reflective questioning to deepen teacher reflection and inform actionable next steps for instructional growth.</p>	<p>➔ Engage in the coaching process with a growth mindset by reflecting on instructional practice, engaging in inquiry with the coach and co-creating actionable next steps aligned to learning goals.</p>	<p>➔ Goal-aligned feedback summary outlining observation evidence, the use of reflective inquiry questions and actionable next instructional steps.</p>
<p>➎ Reflect on observation evidence to identify instructional practices, insights about student learning and key discussion points, and facilitate timely post-observation conversations that use goal-aligned feedback to guide next instructional steps.</p>	<p>➔ Discuss evidence of instructional practice, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and use goal-aligned feedback to determine next instructional steps for improving student learning.</p>	<p>➔ Post-observation reflection protocols or coaching debrief forms highlighting instructional strengths and next steps for improvement.</p>

5. Professional Learning (How Coaches Build Educator Capacity): *Support meaningful professional learning aligned to teacher needs and instructional priorities by helping educators apply new practices, reflect on their impact and strengthen instructional expertise across the school community.*

COACH BEHAVIORS	TEACHER BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>➊ Analyze multiple sources of evidence, including surveys, conversations, classroom observations and student learning data to identify professional learning priorities aligned to teacher needs and instructional goals.</p>	<p>➔ Share insights about instructional practices and student learning through surveys, conversations and reflection to help identify professional learning priorities aligned to instructional goals.</p>	<p>➔ Needs assessment summaries incorporating survey results, observation trends, teacher reflections and student learning data to identify professional learning priorities.</p>
<p>➋ Collaborate with school leaders and teacher teams to design professional learning aligned to instructional priorities and student learning needs that models the use of effective protocols, instructional practices and technology tools.</p>	<p>➔ Engage in professional learning by practicing modeled protocols, strategies or tools and discussing how they can be applied to improve classroom instruction.</p>	<p>➔ Professional learning agendas or facilitator materials modeling protocols, strategies or technology tools for classroom application</p>
<p>➌ Differentiate professional learning and coaching support based on teacher readiness, experience and content-area needs to accelerate instructional practices and student learning.</p>	<p>➔ Engage in targeted professional learning and coaching support aligned to instructional goals, readiness and opportunities for instructional growth.</p>	<p>➔ Teacher professional learning plan listing teachers by tier or learning group based on needs assessment results and identifying targeted coaching and professional learning supports.</p>
<p>➍ Co-plan instruction with teachers to identify high-leverage practices or technology tools, model the lesson with students and guide a gradual release cycle from coach modeling to co-teaching to teacher implementation.</p>	<p>➔ Collaborate in lesson design, observe and analyze student responses during modeled instruction, co-teach the lesson with the coach and implement the practice independently to strengthen student learning.</p>	<p>➔ Coaching cycle documentation detailing co-planning, modeled instruction, co-teaching, teacher implementation of the targeted instructional practice and targeted teacher reflection on future use.</p>
<p>➎ Support teacher teams in developing high-functioning collaborative practices by introducing structured agendas and protocols, facilitating analysis of instructional practices and student learning, and gradually releasing responsibility as teams become self-directed.</p>	<p>➔ Participate actively in collaborative team meetings by using agreed-upon agendas and protocols to analyze student learning, reflect on instructional practices and develop shared instructional strategies.</p>	<p>➔ Team meeting agendas outlining a plan for analyzing student learning and instructional practice, protocols documenting the analysis process and shared instructional plans or action steps developed through team collaboration.</p>
<p>➏ Establish processes for evaluating professional learning by gathering teacher feedback, examining evidence of instructional practices and analyzing student learning results to determine impact and guide future learning priorities.</p>	<p>➔ Provide feedback on professional learning experiences and demonstrate how new practices are applied in classroom instruction to improve student learning.</p>	<p>➔ Professional learning evaluation summaries, including teacher feedback and evidence of instructional adjustments or student learning outcomes.</p>